

# SPINE HEALTH NEWSLETTER - JULY 2011

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: HEATH GALLETINE, DC

## IS EXERCISE THE KEY TO BEATING BACK PAIN?

Exercise is an element found in almost every back and neck pain treatment plan. Proper exercise can improve flexibility, increase strength, reduce existing pain and prevent future occurrences. It can be used successfully alone or in conjunction with other treatments. However, exercise isn't easy and it's important for back pain patients to do the right kind of exercises given their specific back condition.

## EXERCISE AND BACK PAIN

A typical response to experiencing back pain is to take it easy - either staying in bed or at least stopping any activity that is at all strenuous. While this approach is understandable and may even be recommended in the short term, when done for more than a day or two it can actually undermine healing. Instead, active forms of back exercises are almost always necessary to rehabilitate the spine and help alleviate back pain.

When done in a controlled, gradual, and progressive manner, active back exercises distribute nutrients into the disc space and soft tissues in the back to keep the discs, muscles, ligaments and joints healthy. Consequently, a regular

routine of lower back exercises helps patients avoid stiffness and weakness, minimize recurrences of lower back pain, and reduce the severity and duration of possible future episodes of low back pain.



To be effective, a patient's program of back exercises should be comprehensive, working the whole body even if it targets the back. Two back exercises commonly recommended for back pain are McKenzie exercises and dynamic lumbar stabilization.

Read more on back strengthening exercises:

## ABOUT DR. GALLETINE

Visit Dr. Galletine's profile on Spine-Health.com to learn about his latest treatments and his special offers for new and returning patients.

<http://www.spine-health.com/doctor/chiropractor/heath-galletine-lexington-ky>

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<http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/exercise/back-strengthening-exercises>

## STRETCHING FOR BACK PAIN RELIEF

Almost everyone can benefit from stretching the soft tissues - the muscles, ligaments and tendons - in the back, legs, buttock, and around the spine. The spinal column and its contiguous muscles, ligaments and tendons are all designed to move, and limitations in this motion can make back pain worse.

Patients with ongoing back pain may find it takes weeks or months of stretching and other back exercises to mobilize the spine and soft tissues, but will find that meaningful and sustained relief of back pain will usually follow the increase in motion.

Keep the following in mind when starting a stretching routine as part of a program of back exercises:

- Wear comfortable clothes that won't bind;

- Stretching should be pain free; do not force the body into difficult positions;
- Move into the stretch slowly and avoid bouncing, which may actually tear muscles;

Read more about what to keep in mind when starting a stretching routine: <http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/exercise/stretching-back-pain-relief>

## SPECIFIC HAMSTRING STRETCHES FOR BACK PAIN RELIEF

The hamstrings run through the back of each thigh. Tightness in this muscle limits motion in the pelvis which can increase stress across the low back and corrupt correct posture. Stretching the hamstrings with these following exercises (or as part of a routine of back exercises) can gradually lengthen them and reduce the stress felt in the lower back.

Options for hamstring stretching exercises, listed from most difficult to least difficult, include:

### Standing Hamstring Stretch

This is the most common technique. While standing, simply bend forward at the waist with arms hanging down and with legs relatively straight. Try to touch the toes but do not strain to do so. Stop when a stretch is felt in the hamstring.

### Chair Hamstring Stretch

Less strain is applied to the back by sitting on a chair and placing the legs straight out in front on another chair. In this position, reach toward the toes. One leg at a time may be stretched.

Read about other hamstring stretching exercises:

<http://www.spine-health.com/wellness/exercise/specific-hamstring-stretches-back-pain-relief>

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